



04/13/2021

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for Budget Article 16 – Section 6

Dear Chairman Abney and Members of the House Committee on Finance:

We are submitting testimony today in **support of Budget Article 16 – Section 6** from Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE), a student-led homelessness direct service and advocacy organization at Brown University and member of the Homes RI Coalition. Through HOPE's direct service programs -- such as nighttime outreach and the Housing Assistance Collaborative (HAC), we have had the opportunity to hear the stories and build relationships with members of the community who are facing the direct effects of Rhode Island's housing crisis.

Budget Article 16, Section 6 would establish a dedicated funding stream to increase the supply of safe, healthy, and affordable homes. The creation of a dedicated funding stream for affordable housing production and redevelopment is an essential component necessary for Rhode Island to make progress on its statewide housing goals.

As the largest provider of nighttime outreach to people experiencing homelessness in the state, we know very well the struggles of those with lived experience of housing insecurity. We hear constantly of the struggles of having nowhere to call home – nowhere to feel safe and secure. There simply are not a sufficient number of available homes in the state. According to [HousingWorksRI](#), Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, and Maine all spend more on housing than Rhode Island does, with Massachusetts spending around \$100 per person, Connecticut about \$95, Vermont about \$77, and Rhode Island only roughly \$21. This underinvestment has consequences: there is currently a deficit of about 22,000 affordable housing units in Rhode Island. This accentuates housing insecurity and results in the tragedy of over 1,000 Rhode Islanders being homeless each night.

Thank you very much for reviewing our testimony and let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Gabe Mernoff, on behalf of Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere